

REMARKS

After entry of the foregoing amendments, claims 1, 2 and 4-18 are pending in this application. Claims 3, 19 and 20 are hereby cancelled. Claims 1, 2, 4, 5 and 7-15 are rejected. The Examiner objects to claims 3, 6 and 16-19.

Claims 1, 2, 4, 5 and 7-15 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Hornbeck (U.S. Patent No. 6,323,982 B1) in view of Giebel et al (U.S. Patent No. 6,206,290 B1). The Examiner objects to claims 3, 6, and 16-19 as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but indicates that they would be allowable if rewritten in independent form. Applicants respectfully traverse the rejection in view of the following remarks.

The allowable subject matter of claims 3 and 19 is hereby incorporated into independent claims 1 and 10, respectively. Claims 6 and 16-18 are rewritten in independent form, and are in condition for allowance. Further, claim 13 is amended to include aspects of subject matter deemed allowable in section 4 of the Office Action dated March 18, 2004, and is submitted to be in condition for allowance.

Applicants thank the Examiner for the courtesies extended to the undersigned attorney during the interview of February 11, 2004. In order to satisfy 37 C.F.R. §1.133, it is submitted that during the interview the references of Hornbeck and Giebel were discussed, and the Examiner noted that:

"...the lack of motivation to combine both references [was discussed] and new search will be done. Agreement was reached on lack of motivation."

Applicants agree with the Examiner in regard to the lack of motivation to combine the references and do not concede to any particular statements made in the March 18, 2004 Office Action. In an effort to expedite prosecution and obtain varied protection for the invention, the present amendments are being made to place the case in condition for allowance.

In view of the preceding amendments and remarks, reconsideration and allowance of this application are now believed to be in order, and such actions are hereby solicited. If any points remain in issue that the Examiner feels may be best resolved through a personal or telephonic interview, he is kindly requested to contact the undersigned attorney at the local telephone number listed below.

An Excess Claim Fee Payment Letter with appropriate fee accompanies this document. The USPTO is directed and authorized to charge all additional required fees (except the Issue/Publication Fees) to our Deposit Account No. 19-4880. Please also credit any overpayments to said Deposit Account.

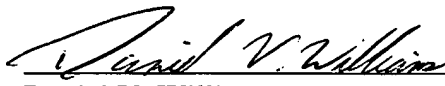
Respectfully submitted,

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